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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| Editorial Comment .....  | 2    |
| The Child-In-School and the Helping Team—                      |      |
| Helen L. Palmetter .....                                       | 3    |
| The Relation of the School To Protective Service For Children— |      |
| Jane Wille .....   | 19   |



## EDITORIAL COMMENT

In this issue of the BULLETIN, two distinctly separate and vital aspects of school social work are considered. Miss Palmeter's paper is concerned with the interaction of pressures and personalities of team work in the school with the ultimate purpose of being helpful to the child as well as to those responsible for his emotional, social and educational growth. On the other hand, Miss Wille discusses the authoritative approach of the school social worker to the parents whose children are showing definite signs of neglect and the worker's activity in relating these problems to the proper community agency. Both papers make a good contribution to the knowledge of various facets of the activity of the social worker in the school.

# THE CHILD-IN-SCHOOL AND THE HELPING TEAM

By HELEN L. PALMETER

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This paper centers around the thinking of a school counselor regarding children who are unable to use and get satisfaction from school. Many of these children with problems fall within her scope of helping. Emphasis is placed on trying to understand what is wanted and needed through material revealed in referral and early interviews. Through such understanding the counselor determines what she can do to help within the limits of her function, and who is needed and able to participate actively on the helping team. Case material illustrates how this thinking was put into practice.

In a school setting the function of the counselor is to help the individual child use what the school offers to the limit of his ability. Her focus is on helping the child to help himself, helping the school personnel to understand and meet his needs, and helping the parent to help his child with problems in school. She aims to help the child more in relation to his school world than in relation to his deeper inner conflicts. She tries to foster personality growth through effecting necessary changes in the environment and through supporting the child in his attempts to work through relationship difficulties and reality situations that interfere with his use of school. The counselor keeps in mind that her scope of helping does not include psychotherapy and the resolving of deep inner conflicts. Where this is needed and wanted she suggests that parent and child seek the help of a psychiatrist.

To be helped it is necessary for an individual to feel a need for and to want help. He must be willing and able to change, to assume responsibility for seeking or accepting treatment for himself, and to take a part in working through his problems. To participate, to change, and to want help are important needs in any helping process. How successful an individual child may be in becoming his best self in school is determined by the extent to which he and others recognize and are able to do something about these needs. Their use and effectiveness is dependent upon the development of some feeling tone for the counselor, and in turn to feel liked and accepted by her. Only with these strengths and this kind of relationship is there sufficient desire for a better adjustment and sufficient propelling force to bring it about. *Who needs to want, to change, and to participate in order to help the child-in-school?*

\* Title used in Rochester for school social worker.



There are many individuals who may necessarily become active in the interests of a child. Each situation is individualized regarding who is needed and able to become a member of the helping team. Each one's part in wanting, changing, and participating is different in relation to the difficulty and his role in treatment of it. In some cases social agencies, clinics, psychiatrists, specialists in school such as nurse and psychologist, and others may be active. We, however, shall confine ourselves in this paper to those pertinent to almost every referral in a school setup. *SCHOOL PERSONNEL*—Teachers and principals work every day with the child and are invaluable to cooperative efforts in understanding and treatment. *PARENTS*—The child is fundamentally the responsibility of the parents and this should not be taken from them. *THE CHILD*—Children are the clients. They are the ones around whom all of the activity centers and in whom or for whom there must be some change, whether it be direct or indirect, inner or outer. The counselor concerns herself not only with the individual child in school but also with the many adults to whom he and she are responsible and who in turn have some responsibility toward him. Ideally all will look out the window together, share understanding and treatment responsibility, and respect confidentiality of material. Only through such working together can each feel free to express himself and formulate ways of helping in his own capacity without duplication. Wanting, changing, and participating are necessary not only in relation to the child but to all who are concerned with his adjustment. *Where then does the responsibility of the school counselor lie?*

The counselor's initial responsibility is to the referring person. She seeks answers to such questions as, "Why is the child of concern to the referring person?" "What is her attitude, understanding, and purpose in bringing him to the attention of the counselor?" "What does she see as possible causes of maladjustment and what has she done to try to mitigate them?" "What help does she want from the counselor, and to what extent will she be able to share in searching for further understanding and in working together?" "Does the referring person want to change to help the child? That is, does she see herself as causative to his problems, or does she want him or someone else to change?" "Is there anything in the environment that should and could be modified?"

Although the counselor's initial responsibility is to the referring person, it seems to me that her major responsibility is to the child. Persons other than the child himself usually take the initiative in seeking help for him. Thus a child is "referred" and in most instances is completely unaware of that referral. The counselor, in turn, does not know if he

feels the need for, wants, and is able to use her service. She, therefore, needs to know him first hand, through himself. She needs to know if the problem as referred is of concern to him. She needs to know if he is able and wants to do something about it. She needs to know if he has other troubles that were unknown to the referring person. She needs to know if the basis of the maladjustment is within him, his environment, or within someone in his environment. She needs to know if he or someone or something else should and can change if he is to become his best self. She needs to know how he will feel about her talking with others concerning his difficulties.

Not a small part of the counselor's responsibility is to the school personnel and parents. We know that a child is unable to control many things that happen to him, and adults are very important people in his life regarding both his inner and outer needs. Thus a child, unlike an adult, often can not make decisions and act on them alone. He sometimes needs others to become active in addition to himself if he is to be helped or is to help himself. So the child who requires individual attention in school is the center of concern but adults with whom he lives and works are usually needed on the helping team. Their participation is necessary not only to better understand the total situation, but also to aid in deciding if and how his problems may be mitigated, and to take an active part in treatment if indicated. As parents and educators they have a responsibility and contribution unique to their position, and that responsibility and contribution should be utilized. It is important to know the attitudes, feelings, and concerns of school personnel and parents. It is important to know whether or not they see a problem and how they feel about it. It is important to know what they see as possible causes, whether or not they can accept them, and what they have tried to do or are ready and willing to do. *How then does the counselor proceed?*

Every referral should be of concern and given attention as the very fact of referral indicates that someone feels the child is in need of individual help. The counselor in exploratory interviews decides what she can do in terms of her function, and whether or not the situation falls within her scope of helping. She moves in the direction of enabling the child to make better use of what the school offers. She aims to make it possible for him or others interested in him to see and make the necessary changes through her help. This is done through interviews with the individual child, the parents, and the school personnel. In some situations the child may be able to help himself and have little need for the helping team. In other situations it may be necessary for the



school personnel or parents to participate more actively than the child. We do not, however, believe in placing emphasis on them without some focus on and participation by the child. He was the one referred, it is his right to know this, the reason for it, and what the counselor and others are doing about it. At the same time he should take some responsibility for the problem and treatment of it himself. To what extent focus should be with the child, parent or school personnel is determined in each individual situation depending on the needs and strengths. It is important that each one know who else is active and that confidential material will be respected. *What happens after this exploratory period?*

The counselor continues treatment as long as it is wanted or until the child is better able to use what the school offers and thus the treatment aim in a school setting is met. It is important to remember that other problems may be seen, but the counselor must keep in mind the limits of her function and not be tempted to go beyond those limits. The child or his parents may be concerned about further troubles outside the scope of the counselor's function. It is then important that she know school and community resources in order to suggest where the kind of help wanted is available. The needs of wanting, changing and participating will determine whether or not they seek such help and continue with it. If, as is usual, there are difficulties in the use of school while the child and his parent are active with another agency the counselor may continue treatment. In such instances, she works in cooperation with the agency centering her efforts on the child and his problems in school. She utilizes the understanding made possible through the contribution of the other agency to do this most effectively. Care should be taken that this be a cooperative way of helping, rather than duplication of service. The parent and child should know of and agree to this working together in their interest or it should not be done.

From the time of referral until treatment is terminated we find the "musts" of individual strengths and good relationships propelling the needs to want, to change, and to participate. In so far as all concerned are able to meet these requirements will the child be able to alleviate his problems and then use what the school offers to the fullest extent possible for him. It is important to remember that while the child and those interested in him are working together to attain this goal he goes on with his problems. His inability to use school is a growing thing and does not stop with referral or early treatment interviews. Improvement can not be expected until the needs of wanting, changing, and participating have been planted, cultivated, and given ample time



to spread their roots and begin their growth process. Only then are they strong enough to overcome, even to some extent, the problems as referred and revealed during treatment. Only then will there gradually be more ability to use than inability to use school.

Much as we do not like to recognize and accept such a fact there are some children who can not be helped very much, if at all. This may be due to something within the child himself, his parents, or his environment. It is important for the school, the parent, the child, and the counselor to be aware of this and not to attempt the impossible. It is necessary to know and accept that there are limitations to treatment, and that there is no "cure all" way of helping, and that "all can not be cured." Some individuals are not able to form the necessary relationship, and do not have what is needed within themselves, to want, to change, and to participate. Without these, at least to some degree, the child can neither help himself nor be helped to use what the school offers.

Jack Adams illustrates how the counselor made use in practice of some of the above thinking, in working with a boy who was unable to use and get satisfaction from school. She was asked to discuss a situation, in staff meeting, in which it seemed indicated that focus of treatment be with the child. Emphasis was placed on material revealed in referral and early interviews that led to the decision of focus with Jack. This focus was planned in view of what was expressed as wanted and needed, and Jack's desire and seeming ability to do something about his problems.

*Jack Adams was seven years, eleven months of age when he was referred to the counselor by the principal, Mrs. Ball in January 1948. He was in the second grade and was not working up to capacity or making a satisfactory social adjustment. In school he was restless, easily fatigued, complained of noise of the children, day dreamed, lived in a world of his own and had no friends. He thought the work was too difficult and after only a brief attempt to do it became discouraged, disinterested, and discontinued effort. Mrs. Ball, principal, had consulted often with the teacher, a young probationary girl, and tried to help her understand Jack and plan ways of helping him in the classroom. They decided that such treatment was not sufficient. It was quite evident that they needed to know more about this boy and what might be causing his trouble. The principal suggested that they request the help of the school counselor.*

*Before the referral was made, Jack's mother, Mrs. Adams came to school to see the principal. She was disturbed and wanted help for Jack because he was not happy and was feeling failure in school. She saw nothing in the home situation that could be a causative factor and thought of it as a school placement problem. Mrs. Ball discussed with her the possibility of health factors contributing to the difficulty. Jack had had several operations on his left eye and while they helped some the disability was far from corrected. It was not necessary for him to wear glasses and the doctor said his eye condition should not interfere with his performance in school. Treatment for this was being continued. Jack also had ear trouble during the year and lancing was necessary. His hearing in one ear was not very good after that although at the time of referral it was normal. The physician could find no physical basis for complaints of fatigue and recommended psychiatric help. Mrs. Adams found the cost prohibitive and so came to school to see what could be done there.*

*Mrs. Adams asked if Jack could be demoted to first grade where the work would be easier, there would be less tension, and he might not be so easily fatigued. Also, he seemed to make friends more readily with younger children. The principal saw Jack's needs as something more than a placement problem. She suggested to Mrs. Adams the possibility of the help of the counselor which she accepted readily. Mrs. Adams had some need to protect Jack and make school easier for him. She agreed, however, to his staying in the second grade until further causes for his difficulties could be explored and decision made as to whether he needed help through repeating grade or in some other way.*

In this situation we find the principal, Mrs. Ball the referring person. She wanted help to understand Jack so she could work more effectively in his interest as an educator and administrator. She wanted this boy to be able to use school. She wanted to meet the needs of the parent who came requesting help. We see in her referral why this boy is of concern to her and her purpose in bringing him to the attention of the counselor. Her understanding of and recognizing physical difficulties as possible causes of maladjustment are quite obvious. She questioned this factor and found that they were being adequately treated and had been discounted by the physician as basic to Jack's



problems. Mrs. Ball saw the classroom environment as a possible cause and worked with the teacher to help her with ideas that might be effective. She realized the need to know if there were environmental, emotional, or social difficulties that might explain his trouble. This was discussed with the parent and together they planned to refer Jack to the counselor. The principal's presentation of the function of the counselor to parents is excellent. Referrals are suggested only when she thinks the parents are ready for that kind of help. There is no question as to this principal's ability to share in searching for further understanding and in working together. We see her wanting help, and able to make changes and to participate. So at referral the counselor has one strong member of the helping team, functioning in her own capacity, and ready and able to continue to do so in cooperation with others.

A plan was made that the counselor would determine through interviews with child, parent and teacher in what way she could help. It seemed indicated that Mrs. Ball continue work with the teacher in her educational, supervisory capacity. Conferences were planned during which the principal and counselor shared understanding of significant material as it was revealed. As the counselor had worked with Mrs. Ball over a period of time there was no concern that confidentiality of material would not be respected. The principal asked the nurse to continue to follow the health factors. The psychologist's cooperation was also enlisted for her evaluation and to determine whether or not Jack was mentally ready to succeed in second grade.

*School records revealed that in kindergarten and first grade Jack liked to work but seemed slow, tense and easily discouraged. His marks were below average and he was inclined to work and play alone. On a group intelligence test he gained an average rating. Teachers had noted an interest in mechanical things and thought he might have some ability there. He had a good singing voice but speech difficulty (letter sound substitution) interfered with verbalizing. His speech, however, had improved a great deal.*

While records were meagre they did indicate that Jack's difficulties in school were of long standing. Although they had not previously interfered as much with his use of school they had been noticeable throughout his experience there. Interests, abilities and handicaps recorded gave a more complete picture of the boy. They also offered material that could be used in treatment.

*In two interviews with Jack he established a friendly relationship readily. He was aware of his inability to be successful in school and stated that it made him feel "unhappy". He wanted the counselor to help him "to have the work be easier and have school more fun." He revealed that he had no friends in or out of school and this disturbed him. In school the kids were "too busy or chose the fast and best ones." Out of school they didn't let him play because he could not do as well as the others. He thought he was "too slow, too dumb, and not strong enough." He didn't try to improve because it was too hard and dangerous. It was safer to play with little kids and he could win over them. He projected some of the difficulties onto the teacher saying that she gave them too much and too hard work. She filled the boards and it made him tired just to look at what he had to do not to mention actually doing it. He didn't want to pass because if he had four boards of work in second grade, he'd probably have ten in third grade, and a million in college! He, however, did not want to be demoted to first grade. Jack was insecure and fearful in finding his way alone around the building and wanted the counselor to take him to and from the classroom to her office. He expressed a desire to return for interviews "every day" and to stay "all morning."*

*Jack brought out feelings of rivalry toward his brother Jerry. Although Jerry was three years younger he was more capable physically and more alert mentally and Jack was aware of this. Jack feared he would catch up with him in school. Jerry had "lots of playmates." He said Jerry was afraid to slide down hill when actually it was Jack's own fear. Although he had not talked until he was three years of age Jerry accomplished this feat at one. Jack, however, could climb better and sooner. His father was "best of all" and Jack expressed a desire to be like him. "He is strong—you should see him slide and throw a ball."*

Here we have the school child wanting help and able to form a relationship with the counselor. In his own way he expressed concerns similar to those of his mother and the principal regarding his inability to use school. He was also aware of unsatisfactory social relationships in the school and neighborhood. In addition, he revealed feelings of emotional conflict in relation to his brother, and a desire and yet a



fear to grow up and to be like his father. At this point material indicated that part of Jack's trouble was due to feelings within himself and that he was ripe for treatment and needed help directly. He understood and accepted the fact that the counselor would talk with his mother, teacher, and principal as we all worked together to try to help him make things better in school.

We believed the school personnel and the parent were very much needed here. We also believed, however, that Jack could and should take some responsibility for his troubles and treatment of them. He was ready to express his feelings and needed to have them accepted and to be sure of support in trying to change. He knew why he was referred, who was trying to help and something about what they were doing about it.

*The counselor accepted Jack's feeling that school was difficult and that he would like to be a little boy and not have to do the hard work. She suggested, however, that part of him wanted to be a big boy and stay in second grade. She explained that there were two ways of going and wondered how he felt about them. Jack decided he wanted most to be more grown up and to stay in second grade. He agreed that if he stayed he had some responsibility to do at least part of the work. He planned to try each day to beat his own record and not concern himself with group achievement at the time. The counselor was to take the responsibility of calling for Jack for interviews but he was to take the responsibility of going back to his room alone. It was necessary for him to accept the limitation of waiting a week for the second interview although he wanted to come every day. He also could stay only a half hour rather than all morning. While Jack expressed his fears and feelings regarding people, school, and home the counselor made no attempt to interpret this material to him at the time. She stated only that she understood and many boys and girls had similar feelings and problems.*

These two interviews provided an opportunity for Jack to express his feelings and needs as he saw them and to have them accepted. They also provided an opportunity for the counselor to gain understanding, and to decide whether or not she could help Jack. At the same time treatment around the problems in school was begun as he demonstrated a desire to change and an ability to participate. Assurance was given

Jack that he was not unique because of his difficulties and that there were some things he could do about them. As he wanted to stay in second grade he was helped to weigh this desire, to see his ambivalence, and to make a plan to take some responsibility himself to make things better there. The counselor and others could help him but they could not do it for him.

The relationship formed with the counselor gave support, and the wish to stay in second grade provided the propelling force for Jack not only to make a plan but to try to carry it through. To help him grow up, accept limitations, and feel success, an easily attainable educational goal within his ability was set. In addition, it was necessary that he be independent of the counselor in returning to his room, and to accept the time limitation set by her. Jack's ability to define his problem, to feel it, and to decide what he wanted to do about it and how indicated that he could be helped to help himself. He had an important place on and a contribution to make to the team.

*In the first interview with the teacher, Miss Davis, she was very insecure and minimized Jack's difficulties. She wanted to "turn him over" to the counselor so she could "work on him." There was little understanding of the counselor's function and how she as teacher could work in cooperation with her. The counselor discussed her kind of helping and how it depended on teacher participation. This gave Miss Davis some feeling that she had a contribution to make and was needed and wanted. She planned to observe Jack carefully and to explore his singing ability and make use of it if possible to give him some prestige with the group.*

*In the second interview Miss Davis expressed some of her feelings about Jack and his problems. She resented having a child in the room that she could not understand and help educationally. Necessity of "outside help" such as referral to the counselor made her feel that she had failed. This was particularly difficult as she feared it might lower her rating as a probationary teacher. She was baffled by Jack's symptoms and did not know what to do about them. She had tried rest, praise, individual attention, and insisting work be completed. Other children responded to these ways of helping and she could not understand why they were not effective with Jack.*

*The counselor accepted Miss Davis' feelings and en-*



*couraged her to express them. She gave reassurance that what the teacher had tried was sound and often effective. The fact Jack did not respond indicated there were further causative factors that needed to be explored. This usually required individual help that did not fall within the teacher's function. In such instances the counselor or some member of the school personnel might have a contribution to make. The counselor suggested that referral often indicated understanding of function and teamwork and that it always had to be kept in mind that more often than not several people are needed on the helping team.*

*Miss Davis said it made her feel better to realize that seeking help was no reflection on her ability as a teacher. It helped her to know that school records and Mrs. Adams both indicated that Jack's problems were of long standing. This gave security in that she was not to "blame." Her sense of failure was lessened when she understood that she was not expected to "cure all."*

*The plans made with Jack were discussed and Miss Davis volunteered to help him in his efforts to accomplish something every day. She planned to keep his work in a folder so he could see his progress and show it to the counselor if he wished. Miss Davis planned to give Jack some little responsibility in the care of the room that would help him to feel important and a contributing member of the group. A plan was made for interviews during which counselor and teacher would share understanding and make further plans.*

Here we find a teacher who was disturbed by a referral to the counselor because of her own feelings and inexperience as an educator. As the counselor accepted her feelings, gave reassurance, discussed differences in function, and helped her to feel needed and wanted Miss Davis felt less frustrated and gained more security. As she gained more security she was able to join the helping team and to plan how, in her own capacity, she could try to make school more usable for Jack. Miss Davis was able to form a relationship and to participate. While she was not a strong member of the team she was needed and did have a contribution to make. Indications were that she was beginning to want, to change, and to participate.

The difficulties Miss Davis saw, how she felt about them, and what she tried to do are quite clear. She had no background in either theory

or experience regarding the function of a counselor. Further discussion of children with problems, differences in function of school personnel in helping them, ways of working together, and use of confidential material was indicated. Further opportunities for Miss Davis to find her way, express her feeling, and to experience being needed and wanted were important. Individualization brought understanding. As she gained understanding she felt less failure, less baffled, and less insecure. She then had more energy to utilize to help Jack in her own way in cooperation with others.

*In the first interview Mrs. Adams reviewed much of the material she had discussed earlier with the principal. It would have been a relief to her if the health factors had been causing Jack's difficulty in school. The counselor suggested that something of that sort could be seen and accepted more easily than the unknown. She wondered if Mrs. Adams wanted to explore other possible causes and explained that in order to help a child it was necessary to know something about what he brings to school. It helped to know about the health factors but it was also important to be aware of and understand his emotional equipment, his life experiences and to what immediate pressures he is being subjected.*

*Mrs. Adams said Jack had never socialized well. In pre-school years and in nursery school he lived in a world of his own and showed no interest in children or adults. She realized that marital difficulties often disturbed children but said that could not be a factor in their situation as she and her husband were very compatible. Because of the housing shortage they were living with the maternal grandparents. While they all got along quite well it did create some problems. There were too many adults to tell the children what to do and they were somewhat inhibited in play because of space limitation and noise. As conditions were somewhat overcrowded it was necessary for the two boys to sleep in the same bedroom. Jack did not like this as Jerry woke up very early and disturbed him. Mrs. Adams had known these living conditions were far from satisfactory but had not realized until she verbalized them how much effect they might have on Jack. The family had been planning to buy a home as soon as they could find one within their financial means. She planned in view of insight gained*



during interview to talk with her husband and to make renewed efforts to move as soon as possible. In response to counselor's questions as to whether there was anything she could do in the present setup Mrs. Adams thought she and her husband could take the children out more. She could not do anything regarding grandparent's part in discipline and play limits as it was their home.

When the counselor wondered about Jack's relationship with his brother Jerry, Mrs. Adams expressed concern because he is so irritable when he gets home from school. This is directed particularly against Jerry. Jack lost all of his irritability when he was home with ear trouble. She had seen all of this as a reaction to his failure in school carried over into the home. During the interview it came to her for the first time that Jack's difficulty might have some of its basis in his feelings about and relationship with Jerry. This she agreed might carry over into school and interfere with his educational progress and social relationships there. The counselor discussed Jack's anxiety and feelings of insecurity in relation to Jerry and other children as he revealed them in interviews. Mrs. Adams was interested and able to accept this and said she would observe the boys more carefully at home and try to do something about it. She then remembered that they often compared the two boys to Jack's disadvantage as Jerry responds, understands, and adjusts so much better. She decided that was not good and planned not to do it in the future.

The counselor wondered if Jack might have been less irritable when home ill as he had his mother's attention and care and could be a little boy and dependent. There were indications that he was immature and had conflict about growing up. Mrs. Adams thought she had somewhat over-protected Jack because of his health history. She realized that now she needed to begin to help him toward independence and satisfactions in being the big boy in the family. It would be possible for Jack to have the privilege of being the last in bed as he is the oldest. Also he could read to her which is something Jerry can not do. She was sure that Mr. Adams would help develop Jack's interest in mechanical things in which he seems to have some special ability. She

*also thought that he would be interested in participating more in sports with Jack.*

In this interview Mrs. Adams expressed concern and defined the problem as she saw it. As she and the counselor looked at the situation together she gained insight, and planned to do something about the difficulties she saw. It seemed probable that she would follow through and would be a valuable member of the helping team. She saw Jack as her responsibility and while she wanted help for him she was willing and able to participate in her own way as parent in cooperation with others. While there were indications of problems within the mother as well as the child Mrs. Adams was not ready to consult a psychiatrist. She wanted to see what could be done in school and at home first. She wanted help primarily for Jack and not herself. Plans were made that the counselor would see Jack regularly and work with school personnel in his interest. Mrs. Adams planned to come for interviews when she or the counselor felt the need to get together.

Jack and all on the helping team wanted him to be able to use what the school offers to the limit of his ability. To do this he needed supportive help and to free himself, at least to some extent, from emotional difficulties that made it impossible for him to succeed educationally and to find and hold his place socially. Help in this area fell within the function of the school counselor. Focus of treatment was centered with Jack the child, as his problems were within himself and he needed to participate to alleviate them. Also, Mrs. Adams asked for help for Jack, not herself. She did not see the deeper implications of her part in the difficulty and we do not believe she was ready to do so. There were some indications that this boy and his mother needed a Child Guidance Clinic to help them meet their basic needs. Mrs. Adams, however, was not ready for that source of help. The counselor, therefore, accepted Jack for treatment as there were some ways of helping him that fell within her function. She explained to the mother that there were limits beyond which she could not go and suggested that later she might feel the need to seek further help.

In addition to child and counselor, the principal, teacher, parent, nurse and psychologist were needed and capable of helping. Everyone on the helping team was able to form a good relationship; to work cooperatively in his own capacity without duplication; to meet to some extent the needs of wanting, changing and participating; to share understanding and treatment responsibility; and to respect confidentiality of material. With such a strong team there was sufficient desire for a

better adjustment, and sufficient help and propelling force to bring it about.

Treatment was continued for eight months until the family moved and transfer of schools was necessary. The counselor had interviews with Jack, the principal, and the teacher every two weeks and with the mother at two month intervals. More frequent interviews would have been desirable but the time limit in the school made that impossible. When Jack moved which coincided with the end of treatment he was better able to use what the school offers. He was succeeding educationally, thought the work was fun, showed signs of growing up, was happy, and had a few friends in school. Many of his symptoms were mitigated. He was active and feeling success and accepted outside of school, in the Y.M.C.A. and in play with a few children his own age in the neighborhood. He felt stronger and more secure, was more aggressive than withdrawn, and was feeling pleasure in growing up and in being a pal with and identifying with his father.

At the termination of treatment some inner emotional difficulties remained and while they were not interfering with the use of school they were a potential source of further trouble. They, however, did not fall within the limits of the counselor's function and thus were not to be treated by her. Mrs. Adams and Jack were given assurance that the counselor in the new school would know about Jack and would help them if they or the school personnel felt a need for it.

Mrs. Adams expressed concern about sibling rivalry and Jack's more active and aggressive expression of his feelings toward Jerry. There was also more awareness and acceptance of conflict within herself about Jack's emotional difficulties. She seemed almost ready to look more closely into her own feelings, to see her part more clearly, and perhaps to seek and accept further help for herself as well as Jack. In view of this the counselor suggested that if she continued to be concerned about the relationship between the two boys and her own feelings around the total problem perhaps she would want to go to the Child Guidance Clinic.

There is no doubt that Jack helped himself and was helped by others on the team. All agreed that he was able to use what the school offers and that the treatment aim in a school setting was met. Jack and each member of the helping team contributed in his own capacity to this successful outcome. Without such teamwork the results might have been quite different. If troubles appear in the new school Mrs. Adams and Jack know that the counselor there is available. If problems in the



home continue to be of concern they know where to go for help if they want it. In this way the counselor placed and left the responsibility where it belongs. It is the privilege of Jack and Mrs. Adams to seek or not to seek further treatment. It is quite probable that if in the future they feel a need for help, they will assume responsibility for seeking such help, and will participate in working through their problems.

## THE RELATION OF THE SCHOOL TO PROTECTIVE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

By JANE WILLE, *Supervisor, Home and School Visitors*  
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The problem of neglected children is one of total community concern. The school, in its position of having some responsibility for all of the children of school age in the community, necessarily become involved in an examination of its responsibility for those children who are not receiving adequate parental care. The school, in addition to its general concern for neglected children, further recognizes the relation between neglect and the benefit which these children get from their school experiences. Obviously, children who are not receiving proper physical care and who are not given support by their parents in getting to school regularly are handicapped in making use of their educational opportunities.

Faced with these two foci of concern, the school must examine and define its responsibility in relation to this problem. While the school does not extend its function to include provision for total child welfare services, the school has generally assumed a responsibility for helping parents and children to use community services. How much and what kind of responsibility the school should take in the problem of neglect is a subject which warrants continued study by schools and agencies. This article is written not in the nature of a solution to the problem, but to raise questions which will further thinking about ways of integrating school-community resources in an effort to assure the minimum essentials of care for children.

Schools traditionally have "come to the rescue" of neglected children. We are all familiar with efforts on the part of the school to provide material help to families in need through giving clothing and food. Such help, when given to families where actual parental neglect exists, does not solve the fundamental problems underlying neglect. Occasionally such meeting of emergency needs may seem justifiable. It is important, however, to consider the long term effect of such giving on the parents and children concerned. The continuance of such provision for material wants may serve to develop a dependence which denies the potential strengths inherent in the family.

Because schools do not consider service to neglected children as part of their function, they have not established structure nor employed personnel to offer this service in a consistent and professional way.

The help that has been given often has been spasmodic and unrelated to the total family problem. For example, during depression years, shoes were sometimes given to needy children by some schools. When economic conditions no longer warranted such a practice, families continued to request shoes. By this time, these families had developed an expectancy of this service to such an extent that they did not easily accept their own responsibility. It was difficult to understand the changed position of the school in respect to their requests. Through temporarily taking over a parental or community (Department of Welfare) responsibility, the school found itself in the position of receiving criticism for having withdrawn its largesse. This criticism was the result of a misunderstanding on the part of parents and children about the limits of the school's function. It created attitudes toward the school which were detrimental to education.

It would be possible to enumerate many other examples of ways in which schools have attempted to help children who seem to be neglected by their parents. These would include financial assistance, providing food, finding foster homes and other types of care. Much of this help has been given because of a deep concern for the child, but with little understanding of the rights of parents or of ways in which they can be helped to take responsibility for their children. At the present time, when evidences of neglect glare from the headlines of newspapers, it seems vitally important that all community agencies make every effort to help parents with the many problems which they may meet in assuming the responsibilities which are rightfully theirs.

During recent years social agencies which assume a protective function in relation to children have been examining and defining that function in an attempt to clarify for themselves and for the community the specific nature of protective service. Mrs. Claire Hancock, in a recent article,\* defines the essential needs of children as follows:

- "1. Physical care that includes a reasonably decent place to stay, sufficient food, suitable clothing.*
- 2. Children need constant and consistent attention from an adult.*
- 3. Children of school age need a supporting kind of help from their parents to get to school regularly, on time,*

\* "Protective Service for Children as Developed in the Counties by a Public Agency"—  
Claire R. Hancock. (*"Counselling and Protective Service as Family Case Work,"*  
Pennsylvania School pps. 100-123.)



*and sufficiently presentable so that they are not set off from other children.*

*4. Children need control, discipline and direction from their parents."*

Recognizing these needs as essential, the worker from an agency offering a protective service proceeds with the parents on the following assumption: "If some of these essentials are missing, we must proceed on the basis that something is wrong and does have to change and that if it doesn't the agency is responsible for acting in behalf of the children through a court petition".

In the total problem of services to neglected children the school needs to consider the areas in which it can appropriately work and those which should be referred to other community agencies. One area in which the school has a protective function which has been defined by law in most states is that of school attendance. Compulsory attendance legislation has placed upon the school the responsibility for initiating legal action in instances of violation of attendance laws. Schools have set up various administrative channels for implementing and carrying out this legal responsibility. In some schools this is done through Attendance Officers, in others through school social workers, principals, counselors, or others. Regardless of the administrative structure, the service itself is designed for the protection of children. It is directed toward helping parents to assume responsibility for their children's school attendance.

In this kind of service the school worker offers help to the parents with problems which they may be having in relation to the child's school attendance. This may be similar to help offered in other types of school problems. There is a difference however, in that the worker represents the authority of the school law. The worker must make it clear to the parent that failure to take responsibility for children's school attendance constitutes neglect and will require protective action.

The kind of action taken varies according to the laws and the resource available in the community. Experience with action which only imposes a fine for violation of the attendance law confirms our expectation that such legal action results in improved attendance in only some cases. If parental failure to meet obligations in respect to attendance laws is only one expression of a more encompassing neglect touching other phases of the child's life, fining a parent is not sufficient; the children need protection. In some communities, protective services offered by family and children's agencies help to meet this problem. In other

communities the Juvenile Court may be the only resource for protective service. Regardless of the agency which is used, the school has a responsibility to clarify with the parent the action which it must take in referring parents to the agencies.

Often in work with parents a clear discussion of their responsibilities and the action which will be taken if they are unable to meet these responsibilities helps them to participate actively in a plan for change which is understandable and definite.

Mrs. Kelly, mother of eight children attending elementary and junior high schools, often was uncertain about the exact dates of their school attendance. If Tommy, age ten, came home with an excuse that the school doctor sent him home because of a cold or sore throat, Mrs. Kelly generally accepted his statement. Later when the school principal called Mrs. Kelly about Tommy's irregular attendance, Mrs. Kelly could not recall exactly which days he had been home during the past month. Even though Tommy was inventing excuses about illness and being sent home, Mrs. Kelly had other problems. When she learned that sometimes Eva, age fourteen went to visit an older girl friend instead of going to school, Mrs. Kelly became angry at Eva, but felt helpless about keeping track of her and also Robert, age fifteen, who was occasionally truant.

When the school social worker discussed the frequent illegal absences of the children with Mrs. Kelly, she explained to her the necessity for change. She offered help to Mrs. Kelly in managing to take hold of this problem. The school social worker suggested a one month period as a reasonable time during which they might work together to evaluate whether Mrs. Kelly could effect sufficient improvement in the school attendance of the children. There was an understanding that court action would have to be taken if illegal absence continued.

At first Mrs. Kelly was inclined to be somewhat angry and defensive. She could do no more than send the children to school. Why didn't the school keep them there after they arrived? Sometimes Robert just walked out of the door. Couldn't the teachers stop him? And as for Tommy, Mrs. Kelly didn't always know whether his complaints of illness were real or imaginary. It was true that sometimes he seemed much better as the day progressed, and he then wandered off somewhere. When the school social worker explained to Mrs. Kelly that the school doctor would give Tommy a slip if he were not to be admitted to class, Mrs. Kelly agreed to examine this slip. On days when

he complained of illness, she could send him to school so that the school doctor could determine if he were really ill.

Mrs. Kelly then expressed concern about Eva. She worried about her association with an eighteen year old girl who was probably encouraging her to stay out of school. Mrs. Kelly asked the school social worker if she could talk with Eva. The school social worker agreed that she could talk with Eva about problems she might be facing in school but stressed the importance of Mrs. Kelly's help in working through problems arising from her friendship with Dorothy. Mrs. Kelly thought that Robert's father could probably "settle him", but she hadn't told him about Robert's playing hooky. Mrs. Kelly thought that she could discuss this problem with Mr. Kelly who could help with Robert.

When the school social worker talked with Eva, she brought out her feeling of resentment about home responsibilities. The boys could do as they pleased but she wasn't allowed to bring friends home, and had to come right home from school to help. Often she didn't have decent clothes to wear to school. Her friend, Dolly age 18, helped her to curl her hair and sometimes gave her clothes such as sweaters and a skirt. Eva was encouraged to give expression to these typical adolescent concerns. In further interviews it was possible to help Eva towards a more satisfying experience in school. Mrs. J., sewing teacher, permitted her to have material for a dress, Eva paying for it in small amounts. With some interpretation, Mrs. Kelly was able to see the importance of permitting Eva to bring friends home occasionally, and to attend neighborhood club meetings.

During the one month period agreed upon, Mrs. Kelly visited the school and phoned at regular intervals to inquire about Tommy. Teachers remarked that the Kelly children looked better cared for. At the end of the time, Mrs. Kelly seemed proud of her accomplishment in being able to say that none of the children had missed a day, since she had visited the school three weeks before.

In the work with the Kellys, the school social worker, assuming the responsibility which has been assigned to her in the law, explained to Mrs. Kelly the conditions under which they would work together. She pointed out to Mrs. Kelly the responsibility of a parent for meeting the requirements of the law, and offered Mrs. Kelly professional services to help her with problems which she had in meeting these requirements.

In some instances attendance is only one part of a more inclusive problem of neglect. In such instances the school social worker must interpret to the parents the fact that the community requires that children



receive the minimum essentials of care. This becomes the concern of the school since such care is essential if children are to make constructive use of their school experience.

This is illustrated in the work with the parents of Jim, age 14, who was showing the effect of being "on his own" with insufficient parental support. Mrs. Jones had recently remarried and was more concerned about her relationship with Mr. J. than in providing for Jim. He was inattentive in school and prone to amuse the class by his silly remarks. Occasionally he was truant and often tardy. His appearance in school gave evidence of lack of care. In an effort to talk over Jim's problems with Mrs. Jones, the school principal learned that Jim often stayed with Mrs. S., a Juvenile Court foster parent, who felt sorry for him because of his mother's lack of interest. She often took him in off the street when he seemed to have no place to sleep. The school social worker had previously discussed with Mrs. Jones some of Jim's school problems.

It was found that, following Mrs. Jones's recent marriage, no adequate living arrangement had ever been made for Jim. There was no room for Jim which meant that he slept sometimes on the floor in his parent's room, and sometimes with friends and relatives. Although Mrs. Jones had said that she would make definite arrangements for Jim, this had not been done. Because of the persistence of these problems, the school social worker met with Mr. and Mrs. Jones to discuss further the school's continuing concern about Jim's behavior and his lack of care. It was evident at this time that unless the parents could provide more adequate care for Jim, the school would have to bring this situation to the attention of legal authorities.

When the school social worker visited Mrs. Jones she found that she had recently moved to a one room apartment. The school social worker discussed the continuing problem of Jim's difficult behavior in school and the school's concern about his care. Mr. Jones became rather angry and offered the explanation that satisfactory arrangements were now made for Jim and he did not understand why the school should interfere. The worker recognized his feeling, but explained that the school does have concern about the care that children receive. She explained that unless a plan is worked out which would permit Jim to have a satisfactory place to stay, referral to Juvenile Court would be necessary to offer protection for him. Mrs. Jones seemed concerned and said that she did try to provide for Jim, but that she had not been well and had not found landlords willing to rent to her if she acknowledged that she

had a child. However, at present she had made an arrangement with another tenant to permit Jim to share a room with her son. The worker said that Mrs. Jones was showing a willingness to give Jim the kind of care he should have. She could understand how difficult this might be since Mrs. Jones had not been well, and had been facing difficulties in finding rooms. Mr. Jones also seemed to be interested in Jim and did not see him as a troublesome boy. However, the school expected that children should have consistent care and that boys of Jim's age could not be expected to shift for themselves as Jim had been doing. Mrs. Jones agreed with the worker's comment and thought she could make more adequate plans for the boy. The worker said that she and Mr. and Mrs. Jones could work together over a period of six weeks to evaluate the adequacy of the present plan. She further explained to Mrs. Jones the school requirement that Mrs. Jones notify the school of any change of address and that she write excuses for any absences or tardiness. Mrs. Jones agreed to assume this responsibility.

In areas of neglect which do not specifically relate to school attendance the parent may have some difficulty in understanding the right of the school to question this neglect. It seems important that the school assume responsibility for interpreting the requirements of the community to the parent. In doing this the school social worker should help the parent to use any community resource which offers service in relation to the problems which may confront him in meeting these requirements. If it is evident, however, that the parent is not able to seek this help and to effect a change, the worker has a responsibility to bring situations of neglect to the attention of the appropriate protective agency. It is only as a parent understands these conditions that he has an opportunity to consider what he can and will do to help his children.

It is of utmost importance for the school social worker to distinguish the kinds of neglect which may be dealt with by the school social worker or voluntary community agencies and those requiring immediate referral to an authoritative community agency. When serious evidences of neglect come to the school's attention, the school social worker should establish the validity of the complaint and make the appropriate protective referral. Some conditions of neglect which require prompt evaluation and referral are:

1. *Desertion of children by parents leaving the children unprotected.*
2. *Severe physical abuse of children.*

3. *Exploitation of children through permitting them to steal or commit other unlawful acts.*
4. *Immoral relationships of adults with children.*

In assuming its proper responsibility in relation to neglect, it is essential that the school work closely with community agencies. This is helpful in arriving at an understanding of definition of function and of developing a cooperative working relationship which will offer maximum service to children and their families.



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Membership in a professional organization is a strengthening factor for the individual practicing within that profession. This is as true for the school social worker as it has long been for members of other professions. National Association of School Social Workers has members in 34 states and in Hawaii, Puerto Rico and India.

All members receive the National Association of School Social Workers Bulletin and other materials such as Newsletter, book lists, conference programs, notices, and other publicity. Membership is determined by the training and experience of the applicant.

Applications for membership and a statement of membership requirements may be obtained from the Membership Chairman, Miss Rose Goldman, Room 515, c/o National Association of School Social Workers, 130 E. 22nd St., New York 10, New York.

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